TRUCKING ADVISORY FORUM

Final Report

This report summarizes the results of discussions with a broad range of stakeholders. Individuals raised their concerns about trucking in Saskatchewan and those concerns were considered by the Forum participants.

July 4, 2001

- **Highway Safety**

Safety is of foremost importance to industry and the public. From a trucking perspective accidents represent unwanted delays and expense. From a public perspective, any accident involving a truck tends to leave the operator of the automobile in a disadvantaged position simply because of size. It is in everyone's interest to promote safety above all other goals.

There is a balance between safety and cost-efficiency. Saskatchewan's highway system will never be 100% accident free, even if trucks were removed entirely from the highway system. For example, we can not effectively eliminate the risk of animal hits. We could erect fences along all highways, but the risk does not justify the cost. We must live with a certain level of risk, but we must remain committed to reducing that risk.

Education and awareness are important for any driver in Saskatchewan. All drivers should be aware of the risks associated with Saskatchewan's environment, including the province's highways and the types of traffic that might be encountered (especially large farm equipment or oilfield equipment).

Current policies that consider safety should continue and should be promoted. The use of vehicle performance criteria provides a technical means for evaluating the safety of one vehicle relative to another. It is an excellent step and a useful tool, but it does not address all safety concerns. The whole area of public perception has a significant impact on driver attitudes and practice, and thus on highway safety. Vehicle operating characteristics such as splash and spray should be considered. It should be recognized that splash and spray is not a concern for the vehicles generating it because the truck cabs are high enough that they do not encounter as much problem, even when following or passing another truck. This needs to be reinforced through any awareness packages produced for truck drivers.

Some issues, such as hours of service, have had extensive work done by specialists but are yet to be resolved. This is a factor for safety, but policy makers must recognize the desired goal of minimizing the risk of exposure to fatigued drivers. This is a complex area that requires regulatory guidance. That guidance should be based upon input from experts. Alert drivers are the most important factor in reducing risk, but as a highway agency, there may be better areas on which to focus for immediate benefits. Infrastructure changes, such as rumble strips along the shoulders or delineators between lanes of opposing traffic lanes, can significantly reduce the risk of exiting the driving lane.

A strong strategy for educating drivers, balanced with infrastructure improvements that complement risk reduction (e.g. shoulder rumble strips, lane delineators, reflective markings), can assist in improving the overall safety of the highway system.

- **Economic Development**

Industrial sectors that depend upon transportation will not locate in areas where they may be disadvantaged by truck size or weight restrictions. Transportation can be a major force in

promoting or inhibiting economic development. The challenge for the policy makers is to identify ways by which a portion of the advantages that flow to one group can be re-allocated to the department for construction and maintenance activities necessary to support the desired development.

Key to this process should be recognizing the role of transportation and how it relates to economic development. The demand for improved access and better highway conditions is wide spread. The department cannot realistically respond to all requests, so it is left with identifying priorities on the basis of its strategic plan. As the economy changes, so might the transportation priorities. For example, for many years the potash mine in Esterhazy transported potash to the U.S. border by truck along Highway No. 9. This required that the highway be upgraded to accommodate the heavy trucks that left the plant at 10-minute intervals. This section of highway was important to the economic development of the region because it helped minimize transportation costs. When the rail costs became competitive with the trucking costs, the truck haul was terminated so the route was no longer a priority. The department was then able to redirect resources to address other priorities.

As provider and maintainer of the transportation infrastructure, the department is obliged to act according to its own strategic plan. As a supporter of the province's overall economic development strategy, the department should act according to the provincial priorities. If the department is under pressure to improve access to the potato harvest areas but the provincial priority for economic development is timber processing, then the department would be ill advised to dedicate its funds to improving access for potato development to the detriment of the timber development. This will require closer ties between departments at the strategic levels. Closer ties at the programming levels are important, but they will not optimize effectiveness. Depending upon the length of highway, upgrades may require years to complete, so integrated strategic planning is crucial if the highway is to be ready when required. Whenever transportation is necessary to support initiatives in another department's strategic plan, the Department of Highways and Transportation should be involved as soon as the initiative is identified.

Similarly, department strategies should recognize the importance of transportation to industry's economic well being. Strategic shifts in the delivery of transportation services (such as road restrictions and diversions) have implications on industry's ability to fulfil its strategic pursuits. Alternatively, shifts in industry have implications on the department's ability to fulfil its strategic commitments. The shift from smaller local elevators to larger terminals has caused shifts in the truck movement patterns. Yet the location of the terminal has not optimized access by being based on effective use of the highway system. In instances where the terminals are located along or next to TMS highways, the surface structures cannot accommodate the increase in traffic without substantial upgrades. This will result in either a reduction in the level of service, or the reallocation of funds from another project that may have been identified as having more strategic potential. Industry needs to work with the department to optimize transportation opportunities.

- **Fair Trucking Environment**

The question was asked whether trucking policies should be used as economic development tools. Policies are important tools to support economic development, but are they still serving their intended purpose if they change the industry parameters? One example in which Saskatchewan recognized the importance of an industry is farming. From a transportation perspective, farm equipment is exempted from some regulations to make it easier for farmers to move their equipment. In other instances, owners of vehicles used to support farming operations have been able to obtain lower license fees, insurance rates and less rigorous vehicle inspections. This extended beyond the original intent to provide these benefits to any vehicle owned by a farmer, even though that vehicle may not be directly related to the farming operation.

While this may be important to support the farming sector, it suggests that safety is not the most important factor for all vehicles on the highway. Thirty years ago, the most common farm truck was a two axle truck loaded to 12 700 kg or the three axle truck loaded to 19 000 kg. Now, vehicles with "F" plates can be as heavy as 62 500 kg (the heaviest vehicle allowed in Saskatchewan regulations). There are commercial vehicles in this weight class, but only "F" plated vehicles are exempted from inspections. Although their accident rates have been stated to be lower than those for the commercial fleet, care must be taken to ensure that the accident statistics compare similar numbers. The statistics may indicate that "F" plated vehicles are categorically involved in fewer accidents. This may be because they operate fewer kilometers per year. The vehicle still poses the same risk to highway safety as a commercial truck when it is travelling on the highway (a truck is still a truck, no matter how it is registered); this may not be accurately reflected in the statistics.

Just as the farming environment has evolved, so should the regulatory and policy environment that guides the safe operation of equipment involved in farming. The original policy of supporting the farm sector by making it easier for farmers to do their jobs has been broadly interpreted to the extent that SUV passenger vehicles can have "F" plates as long as the registered owner is a farmer. The policy should not be reviewed with the intent of eliminating the exemptions, but it should be reviewed to define what is necessary for supporting the farming operations. The policy should recognize that many farms now operate more like commercial operations rather than the family farms of the past.

- **System Costing and Route Incentives**

Saskatchewan has a vast highway system that is becoming increasingly more difficult to maintain. The level of service expectations need to reflect the ability to provide the service. Industry should have options for route selection on the basis of safety, access, road quality, travel time and delivery costs.

Shippers prefer to have commodities move by the least expensive mode of transportation available. This is simply good business practice. The costs of operating trucks on the highway system do not necessarily reflect the full capital and operating cost of the system. Highways are public assets available to all licensed vehicles with capital and maintenance costs being funded

from general tax revenues. For other modes, such as rail and air, the system operating costs must include the cost of maintaining the asset. When comparing the costs of transporting a commodity by truck and by rail (assuming that both modes are available from the same origin and destination), the total system costs that factor into the shipper's costs are very different.

Costs can be placed within comparable context by privatizing the highway system or nationalizing the other modes. This would require a major political initiative that could not be accomplished without substantial financial outlay and policy changes. Another way to place the modes within context would be to implement a system whereby those who use the highway system must pay on the basis of the amount of use (number of kilometers) and the amount of the asset they consume (as measured by vehicle weight). Under the current regime, it is uncertain whether trucks or automobiles are paying their fair share of the highway maintenance costs. Although this option requires detailed analysis to address fixed infrastructure costs, it may provide a more palatable option for modal comparisons.

Industry expressed concern that the fuel tax was originally intended to be a dedicated tax for highway construction and maintenance. From a business perspective, the value of Saskatchewan's provincial highway system is approximately $6 B. This means the department must cover a significant amount of annual depreciation to simply maintain the asset without making improvements. Industry has argued that road related fuel tax revenues should be allocated directly for highway maintenance, but the amount of revenue generated may not be adequate, even if supplemented with the revenue from vehicle registration fees. No matter how the figures are calculated or allocated, transparency is important if highway users are to understand whether or not they are paying their share of the highway operating costs.

Current and evolving technologies will allow regulators to identify the exact consumption per vehicle. This will allow the system users to reduce their consumption if they wish to save money. For example, there are test projects underway in the United States in which insurance companies are setting insurance fees on the basis of use. Instead of charging "template fees" on the basis of age, residence, car size, etc., the rates are based on the amount of driving, the time of day (peak hours or non-peak hours), and traffic (busy freeways or rural highways). This has allowed the insurance companies to individualize rates that reflect the real risk. It has also allowed consumers to determine that they can save money if they walk to the store instead of driving. This change in lifestyle has drawn the attention of the Environmental Protection Agency, who is considering adding incentives to encourage people to participate in the program. System costing and route incentives could be used to generate similar results.

If the users of the highway system are paying their fair share of the system operating cost, then there is no need for policies that either advertently or inadvertently promote one mode of transportation over another. Shippers will choose the mode that is most cost effective. Researchers will have incentives to develop new modes of transportation if the old modes become too expensive. Taxpayers will not be burdened by having to support the operation of a public infrastructure; all users will pay their share. The role of the regulators will be to monitor the system costs and ensure that there is a fair base level of service where traffic volumes may not be adequate to provide the desired level of service.

The concept may apply to Saskatchewan, but more research is required before anyone can make a decision to pursue it as an option. Various models should be considered within Saskatchewan's context to identify possible applicability. Government departments will need to consider the implications of changes that might suggest reducing or eliminating the current vehicle registration and fuel taxes in favour of an alternate system. Only after this analysis has been done will the policy makers be in a position to make the best decision for Saskatchewan.

- **Construction Standards**

Highway designs should anticipate the evolution of vehicles and address future needs. Structural design is fairly easy to adjust to accommodate anticipated weight increases within the limits of a design standard. As long as structural integrity is not breached, increases in weights will simply cause the highway to reach its design life sooner than expected. The real challenge for Saskatchewan highways is determining the point at which the highway should be constructed to a structural pavement rather than a thin membrane surface.

Given the uncertainty of these considerations, the structural design life is in the order of only 15 years. Geometric design life tends to be much longer (in the order of 30 to 50 years), so considerations must be more strategic. For example, thirty years ago heavy oil was not cost effective to extract, but now it can be profitable. With the increase in horizontal drilling to access more oil from one well site, the equipment has become much larger. Trucks required to transport this equipment have become larger and heavier. Limits based on 30 year old vehicle designs may limit economic development in the region.

Another consideration for Saskatchewan is the discrepancies in standards between highways in the north and those in the south. Many of the northern highways meet only the most basic standards and may not be able to accommodate increases in truck size or traffic volume.

- **Compliance**

Despite the potential for expanded use of weigh-in-motion, vehicle identification, and other technologies, the public feels a strong need to see a physical presence. Transport Compliance data shows that most violations occur away from the scales and that their efforts on mobile patrol are well founded. However, the public perception appears to be that if there is nobody at the scales, trucks are not being monitored. In most, if not all instances, a sound financial argument can be made for keeping the weigh scales open 24 hours per day with the incremental staff and facility costs being supported by the incremental funds generated through fines. The financial justification is weakened by the fact that the fine revenue is allocated to the General Revenue Fund and may not necessarily re-appear in the department's budget to offset the incremental costs associated with the increased presence at the scales.

The regulatory environment affecting trucking in Saskatchewan is already complex, but necessary. Any changes intended to improve the effectiveness of the transport compliance operation should provide better regulations, not necessarily more regulations. One way to

increase the effectiveness of compliance is to enhance their auditing capability. Current legislation is being considered that will allow Transport Compliance staff to issue overweight charges to those who cause the overweight to occur. This legislation will recognize the joint responsibility of shippers, carriers and receivers, and should lead to some reduction in the damage caused by overweight trucks.

Transport Compliance staff should be able to audit shippers' or receivers' weighbills and issue tickets to overweight carriers on the basis of those audits. All carriers have weigh bills for payment purposes. If they could be charged with being overweight on the basis of these weigh bills, then they would not have to be caught in the act of being overweight. Within reason, they could be charged after the fact. This would provide a threat that would be sufficient to cause most carriers to comply with the regulations. Transport Compliance staff would become more effective in identifying and targeting habitual offenders.

- **Overall Transportation Strategy**

Truck transportation represents one component of a fully integrated transportation system. It is a vital component for many parts of the province where it represents the only mode available for delivery of goods. As a province with a low population base spread over a vast area, and a need to move bulk commodities over long distances, Saskatchewan may not have the capability of providing parallel transportation options using different transportation modes. The greatest efficiencies for Saskatchewan lie in integrating its strategies for trucking with air and rail to provide a multi-modal approach to transportation.

The strategy should be considered within the long-term context of other jurisdictions to ensure that the strategy is not drastically out of alignment with other transportation plans. A "made in Saskatchewan" plan in an environment where inter-provincial and international trucking is growing, micro-scale planning will be very difficult. At some point, trucking programs may become out of alignment with other jurisdictions so they effectively inhibit industry growth. For example, if a configuration is proven safe to operate in all provinces, but the permit fees for the vehicle are less than $100 in Alberta and Manitoba but more than $1000 in Saskatchewan, there is little incentive for that company to operate in Saskatchewan. They may seek to allocate their vehicles in other provinces and serve Saskatchewan as little as possible.

Within this context, programs such as the Transportation Partnership Program have a purpose. However, their applications may be limited only to hauls that are specific in nature (such as hauls into northern Saskatchewan with specialize vehicles on identified routes). The relationship of these programs with the transportation strategy should be clearly articulated and reviewed regularly to ensure that they have not shifted from providing an economic benefit to being a detriment to the overall economy of the province.

In addition to pressure from a jurisdictional perspective, Saskatchewan should continue to support the efforts of other groups pressing the federal government for a comprehensive national transportation strategy. A fully integrated multi-modal strategy should be forward looking and agile enough to recognize opportunities for new modes. It should be reviewed regularly to

ensure that it continues to dovetail with other strategies while still responding to Saskatchewan's evolving transportation needs. The strategy should be the guiding force that makes the whole transportation system work for both cars and trucks in urban and rural environments.

- **Transparency**

Financial transparency is difficult to obtain in a system in which programs are supported from the General Revenue Fund (GRF). The GRF forms the basis for a much broader economic program and should not be expected to change in the interest of transportation programs. However, consideration should be given to developing a communication package that explains the amount of road-related revenues. A communications package would allow the public to recognize the cost of maintaining the highway system. This would provide a sense of transparency and understanding for the public.

- **Trucking Program Review**

Saskatchewan's trucking programs are founded on sound economic and technical criteria. As the economic environment or highway and traffic conditions change, the programs should be re-evaluated to ensure they are serving the original purposes. As the overall transportation strategy evolves, the role of the trucking may evolve, so the context may change. These changes should be reflected in the special haul programs.

Trucking programs may be valuable tools in supporting economic development, but that aspect of the program should be based on input from the Department of Economic and Cooperative Development. As new programs are considered, there should be a mechanism to draw together the appropriate department representatives from all affected departments to consider the initiatives. This is not suggesting that the Department of Highways and Transportation should be restricted by other departments; the special programs should be consistent with the strategic direction for the province.

Trucking programs should be fair to all. They should be accessible to all companies that may benefit from the program privileges. The size of the company should not matter and the conditions should apply equitably to all program participants.

Trucking programs should be subject to regular review. This review should recognize the financial commitments that are required from the companies in the programs. They should be given enough time to purchase and pay off equipment. This may mean that each program should be reviewed every five years, but if the review recommends that the program be terminated, the program should be phased out over enough time to allow the program partners to recover their investments. The one exception to this would be if legitimate safety concerns arise with the program vehicles. If safety is in question, the program should be suspended immediately and the suspension should remain in effect until the safety concern is addressed. Reviews of the trucking programs should involve input from a broad range of stakeholders, including industry, interest groups and government.

Future Action

The input from the Trucking Advisory Forum can be categorized as follows:

- Input that can be acted upon immediately
- Input that calls for further research, analysis and review before informed decisions can be made

In both instances, the future action should be undertaken within the context of the "big picture". All activities should recognize the inter-relationship with, and potential impacts on other provincial and national policies if they are to be effective.

Immediate Action:

1. Establish an inter-departmental committee to consider the economic, social and technical impacts of trucking programs in Saskatchewan. This committee should be structured to recognize that each department has its own strategy that responds to its own mandate. That mandate should not be diminished by input from other departments. Such a committee could ensure a coordinated approach to ensure that each department's programs support the overall economic strategy for the province.
2. Establish better databases to support policy decisions relating to trucking. Lack of accurate and current data in several aspects of the trucking industry is a hindrance to developing good policies.
3. Conduct a thorough review of the trucking programs (especially the Transportation Partnership Program) to determine whether they respond to the current needs of the province and industry in general. This review should involve input from stakeholders to ensure that the economic and social issues are addressed, but it should also involve a broader range of industry representatives who are familiar with the programs and able to asses their impact on shippers and carriers. This review should be scheduled on a regular basis (every two to five years).
4. Provide a mechanism for ongoing consultation and collaboration of parties who are interested in providing constructive input to trucking policy review and development. Whatever format is chosen, it should encourage open dialogue, facilitate collaboration and involve key stakeholders.

Further Research Analysis and Review:

1. Consider options for optimizing system utility. There is not enough data currently available to determine the social and economic costs to the province of implementing any programs intended to optimize system utility. Further study is necessary before an educated decision can be made about the merits and implications of changes to road pricing, levels of service, access and general highway standards in Saskatchewan.

2. Identify technologies that can improve the efficiency of Transport Compliance operations, but do not rely upon technology. Programs that provide strong presence at weigh scales should considered.

3. Conduct a historical review of exemptions that apply to equipment with "F" plates. The review should document the evolution of farm equipment relative to the principles and application of exemptions. This information can be used to determine whether the principles applied when the exemptions were implemented should still apply or whether the exemptions are providing incentives and opportunities that might result in a reduction in the level of safety from that contemplated when the exemptions were implemented.

4. Start a review of the theories applied to highway design and construction in Saskatchewan. The Forum participants expressed concern the current weight system is not working and needs to be re-evaluated. Several models exist (including but not limited to Equivalent Single Axle Loadings, Bridge Formula, and seasonal weight regimes), but more work is required to determine their applicability in Saskatchewan.

5. Clarify the department's current authorities regarding the ability to issue overweight tickets on the basis of audits. This will require seeking legal interpretation of existing authorities and analyzing options for exercising that authority. This review should consider the positive and negative implications of broad powers associated with conducting "audits without cause". A thorough analysis of the implications, costs and benefits should be undertaken.

APPENDIX A

Background

Background

The formation of the Trucking Advisory Forum was approved by Cabinet in May 2000. The Department had asked for approval to consult with stakeholders and obtain input on issues relating to trucking in Saskatchewan. Cabinet directed the department to undertake the consultations and report back in May 2001. This report summarizes the input received through a series of meetings, exchanges of correspondence and constructive input from the participants.

As a land-locked province located long distances from the world markets, Saskatchewan has depended upon the trucking industry to play an important role in contributing to the provincial economy. Because Saskatchewan must depend on trucks for access to much of the province, its best interests are served by creating a strong public policy environment for trucking; one which involves shared decision-making with stakeholders. These policies are necessary to enable the trucking industry to provide service as efficiently as possible giving due regard to both the safety of the motoring public and maintenance of the highway infrastructure.

Traditionally, trucking policies and regulations were developed by each jurisdiction with little regard for regional or national uniformity. In the mid-1980s, the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) and the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) took on the task of seeking agreements which would harmonize weight and dimension regulations. This was done because inconsistencies in vehicle weight and dimension regimes were seen as detrimental to internal trade and having a negative impact on the Canadian economy. Since that time, the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety has administered a program focused on harmonizing vehicle weight and dimension regulation.

The process for developing trucking policies has only recently been addressed by the Council of Ministers. Trucking policies can be considered at two levels. First, the macro level policies that guide the general direction of all regulations and programs. These policy initiatives are intended to reflect the overall interests of society, and reflect general parameters addressing safety, environment and consumption of public highways. The second level of policy development addresses situations where vehicles may not be able to comply with the weight and dimension regulations. Normally these moves may be prohibited, but in some cases the province has determined that the identified vehicles should be allowed to move on the highway system because the movement is essential for economic development and is consistent with the macro level policies.

Saskatchewan has been proactive in developing programs that increase trucking efficiencies. Initially, the programs were unique to each economic development opportunity. Individual arrangements with the companies focused on safety, incremental infrastructure costs, and trucking efficiency. In 1977, the department introduced policies that provided a framework to foster and guide the development of safe and efficient trucking operations within the province.

Analysis of the current trucking policy and programs show an evolution of a common set of

principles. The guiding principles of trucking program development have evolved and can be stated as:

- safety cannot be adversely affected, and indeed should be improved;
- trucking programs to enhance the economic benefits of industry;
- trucking programs to enhance the economic benefits of the province; and
- the taxpayer is not to incur any additional road infrastructure costs.

The traditional approach used by policy makers has been to implement trucking policies and programs based on input from industry. As the needs and priorities have evolved, the process is shifting to an environment involving consultation with a broader base of stakeholders. Decision-making responsibilities still remain with the elected officials, but the process involves shared input from key stakeholders. This is intended to facilitate the development of trucking policies that recognize the concerns of all highway users.

The benefits of stakeholder involvement include:

- the development of more comprehensive policies through informed decision making;
- decisions made and policies developed that are more likely to be accepted because participants have had the opportunity to voice their concerns and discuss the issues that affect them;
- shared learning and education that is of mutual benefit to both stakeholders and government; and
- the development of a mechanism for review of existing policies.

This process is consistent with the department's Vision statement:

> "Transforming Saskatchewan's transportation system to meet the social and economic opportunities of the 21st century by:
>
> - developing and delivering programs and services;
> - providing leadership and expertise;
> - building partnerships; and
> - fostering a positive work environment."

Accountability is an important issue. Simply informing stakeholders will not allow the department to effectively move toward its vision. Policy development and implementation is most effective when it has the commitment of all stakeholders.

What was the purpose of the Forum?

The Forum was established to provide a broad-based group to assist in identifying the key concerns about trucking in Saskatchewan. The issues were then discussed in detail to allow each member of the Forum the opportunity to express their opinions and suggest recommendations to respond to the concerns. These recommendations will form the basis of the policy initiatives the department will be undertaking over the next couple of years.

What were the guiding principles for the Forum?

At the first meeting, the Chair was clear in articulating the expectations and the parameters necessary for the process to succeed. Everyone was encouraged to bring their diverse interests and passion toward those interests to the table. The discussion would be free flowing to reflect the interests of the individuals at the table. The only restrictive guideline presented by the Chair was the requirement that nobody take any comments personally, nor should anyone become defensive if they feel their position is being questioned by another person at the table. Respect for each other's opinions was critical.

Who was involved?

To represent a broad cross-section of stakeholders, the following groups were invited to participate in the Forum. Organizations were encouraged to send their elected president or someone who is familiar with the views and concerns of their organizations.

- Saskatchewan Trucking Association
- Canadian Automobile Association (Saskatchewan)
- Canadian Industrial Transportation Association (CITA)
- Saskatchewan Safety Council
- University of Saskatchewan Transportation Chair
- Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities
- Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities
- Saskatchewan Association of Urban Municipalities
- Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce
- Canadians for Responsible and Safe Highways (CRASH)
- Area Transportation Planning Committee Chairs Committee
- Department of Economic and Co-operative Development
- Department of Northern Affairs
- Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing
- Department of Environment and Resource Management
- Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
- Department of Highways and Transportation

The Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing and the Department of Environment and Renewable Resources were not able to assign staff to participate during the short time frame because of higher priorities within their departments.

CITA and CRASH represent national bodies, so they were invited to sent representatives who reside in Saskatchewan. Both organizations identified local contact people to participate on their behalf.

The department recognized that not all issues would be of equal significance to all groups. The department attempted to facilitate the individual groups' strengths and interests by categorizing

the discussions so groups may choose to miss the discussions on specific topic areas if they chose.

The department's Assistant Deputy Minster, Policy and Planning served as Chair for the meetings. His commitment to attend every meeting emphasized the importance of the Forum and the department's commitment to the process.

In addition to providing a Chair for the Forum, the department provided a secretary from the Policy and Planning Division. The Secretary attended all meetings, coordinated the issues, and served as the primary functioning contact between the Advisory Forum and the department.

At the first meeting, the Secretary reported on other groups who had expressed interest in participating in the Forum. The Forum members agreed that the group should not become larger because they that felt too many people would cause the process to be ineffective. Each member agreed to serve as a liaison to any other group who might be interested in the process. The Secretary was directed to provide the Forum membership contact list to anyone who asked. This would allow the individuals to choose the member who might best represent their interests. If the individual felt there was no person in the Forum who would adequately represent their interests, the Secretary would serve as a contact.

Other groups who expressed interest and received information from the Forum meetings included:

- Prairie Alliance For The Future
- Transport 3000
- Canadian Bulk Haulers Association
- Southwest Municipal Governments Committee

How did the Forum function and how did it interact with the department?

At the first meeting, the participants received general presentation about the trucking policies and programs in Saskatchewan. This was intended to help the participants understand the history and reasons behind the current policies and programs. There was also a roundtable discussion during which everyone identified themes they wanted to pursue over the course of the meetings to follow. The Secretary took the themes, grouped them into manageable categories and built a meeting schedule to ensure that everyone's concerns would be addressed.

The meetings generally involved technical presentations and discussion around the themes identified for the meeting. Presentations addressed highway design, highway alignment, enforcement, technologies, drivers' perspectives, and safety programs. The meeting agendas served simply as guides for discussion. Actual discussions were free flowing and unrestricted.

APPENDIX B

Discussion of the Themes

Discussion of Themes

The Themes were broken into the following broad categories:

1. Infrastructure (Design and Compliance Programs)
2. Logistics and Trade
3. Safety
4. General Administration

Although the themes were generally addressed according to this categorization, the discussions were not restricted and the topics tended to overlap.

Infrastructure:

Infrastructure includes the physical attributes of the roadway. Saskatchewan is in a relatively unique situation in that it has an extensive network of thin membrane surfaces (TMS). These are not structural pavements designed specifically to accommodate truck traffic. These highways have the same structural capacity as a gravel surface but the thin surface eliminates the dust and mud that are evident with gravel roads.

Structural design is highly dependent upon truck traffic. Weights and volumes (or more specifically axle weights, tire sizes and number of axle passes) are key factors in determining the design life of a highway. Although cars don't cause damage and highways should last significantly longer if the truck traffic was reduced, factors such as the wide temperature ranges and frost conditions in Saskatchewan still require high design standards and construction costs. Even without trucks, Saskatchewan's highways would deteriorate because of harsh environmental conditions.

The group discussed the appropriateness of the TMS standard and the cost efficiencies associated with construction and re-construction. There were questions about why the department does not spend the required funds to re-construct highways to better standards when it is resurfaced, rather than saving money on re-construction cots but spending more for on-going maintenance. The cost of reworking a TMS to provide an acceptable driving surface is in the order of $10,000 per kilometer, while the cost of resurfacing a structural pavement is in the order of $150,000 per kilometer. Ultimately, the key to optimizing efficiencies of design and maintenance is timely maintenance. Delaying maintenance may seem to be a suitable way to achieve short term savings, but the long term costs will be higher.

The infrastructure in Saskatchewan was compared with other jurisdictions. The comparison with the highway system in the United States revealed that the cost for construction of a structural pavement is in the order of $500,000 per km. This would be the standard being built for the new portions of the Trans Canada Highway. The Interstate highway standards in the U.S. cost more than $1,000,000 per km to construct.

The group asked whether it would be possible to do a theoretical analysis for two scenarios: first to determine the costs of Saskatchewan's road system assuming the system is required only for

cars, and secondly, a similar calculation for the road system as required to accommodate trucks. Although this can be done in theory, the principles are not practical. If roads are designed only for cars, then they would not be able to accommodate buses, motorhomes, fire trucks or even the smallest of grain trucks. These vehicles create the same risks to the roadways as larger trucks because it is the axle weight that causes the damage. If even one of these vehicles is allowed on a structure designed only for cars, there is a significant risk that the surface will fail.

Speed was discussed. The group learned that on surfaced roads, faster speeds are better. For gravel roads, there is less benefit. This occurs because there is less time for the loading to be transferred through the surface layer to the subgrade. The weakness in this approach however, is that this assumes the roadway surface is fairly smooth. New technologies such as air-ride suspensions and reduced tire inflation pressures assist in compensating for the road roughness.

In addition to the structural design, the roadway also has a geometric design. This design addresses the visual aspects of the highway, including cross-section and alignment for example. It molds the characteristics of the roadway with the driver expectations and vehicle characteristics to address the safety concerns for all highway users. A system-wide approach is used for geometric design so standards are consistent across the country. This standardization is important to ensure that drivers are not surprised by sudden changes that could have a negative impact on safety.

Geometric standards are based upon the average annual daily traffic (AADT). In Saskatchewan, capacity is generally not a problem. There is usually ample space for trucks to pull off to the side if necessary. Although there may be rare circumstances where there may not be sufficient space available, these are exceptions. Highways are not specifically designed to accommodate low probability and high risk incidents, such as an occasional breakdown requiring a vehicle to park at the side of the road.

Transport Compliance operations in Saskatchewan cover a wide range of program areas. Department staff are responsible for enforcing all transport laws, but they focus primarily on trucks and buses. They are responsible for mechanical and driver safety and weight enforcement, but they will also enforce traffic laws for smaller vehicles if they appear to be posing as safety risk. The Branch consists of highway patrol (uniformed officers) and an investigations unit. The investigations unit responds to complaints against carriers regarding issues such as hours of service.

From a department perspective, Transport Compliance Branch plays a key role in sustaining the infrastructure by monitoring truck weights. Overweight trucks are estimated to cause more than $10 million in damage to Saskatchewan's roads annually.

The group discussed the potential benefits of having Transport Compliance staff go to shippers or receivers and lay overweight charges on the basis of weigh bill audits. This would certainly improve the effectiveness by reducing the need to catch violators in the act. Only a small percentage of violators are caught while overweight because Saskatchewan's highway network is vast and there are only 42 uniformed officers working in highway patrol. The group felt the threat of being able to be charged with being overweight would be enough of a deterrent to force

most of the violators to comply. This would allow Compliance staff to focus efforts on the habitual violators.

Shipper/carrier responsibility legislation will allow Transport Compliance staff to move toward this model, but it is intended to address only those shippers who coerce carriers into hauling overweight loads. It will not allow staff to charge carriers on the basis of weigh bills. Concerns were expressed that this program would be used to target the farming industry. The group agreed that any audit programs must be applied fairly to all sectors. In fact, from an infrastructure perspective, the grain haul doesn't pose the greatest risk to the highways; the greatest risk is from the fertilizer hauls that occur during the spring when the roads are at their weakest.

Concerns were raised over the use of "F" plated trucks to haul commercial commodities and the question was asked whether staff check vehicles to ensure that they are not hauling "out of class". Although hauling another person's goods is not allowed with an "F" plated vehicle, this is difficult to enforce. Although an "F" plated vehicle may appear to be hauling commercially, the owner may have obtained a permit to upgrade his vehicle to allow commercial hauling for the load in question. Transport Compliance staff respond to complaints about abuse of registration, but they do not focus field efforts in this area.

There was discussion that perhaps the scales do not need to be operated by Transport Compliance staff. Several options were discussed, including using new technologies such as weigh in motion scales to reduce the need to have staff available at scales, contract out the work at the scale (but the Transport Compliance staff would still have to issue the tickets) and partnering with the private sector to create truck stops and weigh scales at the same locations.

Saskatchewan's fines were compared with other jurisdictions. Saskatchewan has the highest overweight fines in the country, but this is not necessarily providing the desired deterrent. The fines apply only if the carrier is caught; and the chances of being caught are relatively low when compared with the financial benefits to the carrier of hauling overweight. Perhaps consideration should be given to instilling value for compliance rather than punishing violators.

There was a substantial discussion about road pricing and the implications of placing the appropriate pricing signals in the highway system. There was clear opposition to tolls, however there was recognition that a system where the users are charged for highway consumption on the basis of use could be a good step. With the new technologies available, it may be possible to implement fees that reflect origins and destinations rather than the whole system.

There was a discussion around the need to take a multi-modal approach to the transportation system. This is important for the provincial transportation network. Also, a national vision is necessary to understand how Saskatchewan's transportation systems can be coordinated within the national systems. One issue to consider in the multi-modal approach is the expectation of timely door-to-door service. If pricing is a factor in the overall system, those who want priority service should pay for it. This would allow business to evaluate the implications of changing business environments. For example, just-in-time delivery provides benefits to business and industry by reducing inventory and warehousing costs, but the transportation system is bearing

increased costs to support those benefits. Perhaps if the transportation infrastructure were to be properly priced, there would be less incentive to transfer private costs to the publicly funded system.

These considerations should be addressed within an overall transportation plan. As the railways abandon branch lines, they are transferring the cost of transporting the commodities from the privately funded railway infrastructure to the publicly funded highway infrastructure. This cannot be corrected retroactively because there is not enough financial slack in the system to allow the transportation costs to increase.

For Saskatchewan, the biggest issue is the need to move agricultural commodities to world markets. There was a discussion about the implications of retaining branch lines and using smaller trucks for local deliveries. From an infrastructure perspective, highways would still have to be designed to accommodate truck and bus traffic, but their design life may be extended if there are fewer large trucks on the highways. An additional problem for grain handling is that grain moves throughout the system, not from one origin to one destination. For example, demand for various blends mean producers will haul long distances to obtain better grades and higher prices for their grain.

Truck size and weights have increased since most of Saskatchewan's highway system was designed. Most of these increases have been implemented to increase transportation efficiencies. In the early 1980's a study showed that the increases in weight that were proposed at that time would result in annual benefits to the economy in the order of tens of millions of dollars with annual maintenance costs increasing by approximately three to four million dollars. Unfortunately, although the incremental benefits outweigh the costs, the benefits go to a broad base of industry and the maintenance costs are borne by the highway agencies. In Saskatchewan's case, the maintenance budget was reduced significantly in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

There appears to be a strong desire to preserve the entire highway system, but there is no clear vision or strategic direction indicating what this system should look like. This reinforces the need for a comprehensive plan.

From a compliance perspective there was strong support for working toward a level playing field for all industries. There was also a recognition that technology may allow Transport Compliance staff to monitor traffic without being at the weigh scales, but there was a feeling that a physical presence is necessary. Perception is stronger than reality. For example, the presence of a police car on the highway tends to slow the traffic, even if the officer is not watching for speeders. Seeing Transport Compliance officers at the scales gives the public a sense that they are ding their jobs, even if the majority of the overweight violations occur away from the scale locations.

Communication is important for the general public and for truck drivers. 80% of accidents involving trucks are the fault of the automobile; automobile drivers should be educated about how trucks perform and the physical capabilities of the trucks. Truck drivers should be educated about the perceptions of many drivers and the fears they generate among some drivers, especially

the elderly. Communications and marketing are important if trucks are to share the road with smaller vehicles. An awareness campaign would be a good initiative.

Logistics and Trade:

Saskatchewan's trucking programs began with the development of the timber industry in the Prince Albert area. In the 1960's, timber companies were considering locations in Saskatchewan for new mills. They noted that the haul distances from the forest to the mill were significantly greater in Saskatchewan than in Alberta. They would locate in Saskatchewan only if the transportation costs were comparable to those in Alberta. Thus, the department began special programs that saw the development of more efficient vehicles hauling heavier loads in the interest of keeping transportation costs at a minimum.

This led to the question of whether transportation should serve as an economic development tool. The priority for the department is not toward economic development; that is the priority for the Department of Economic and Cooperative Development. The department's priority should be the safe operation of a sustainable infrastructure. The infrastructure and trucking programs should support economic initiatives, but they should not be seen as economic drivers unto themselves. This concept could lead to conflicts if road pricing is considered as a tool for managing use of the infrastructure.

Road pricing and models that might apply to Saskatchewan were discussed. The models include identifying the types of users and charging on the basis of use (as the airlines do with discounted rates for travelers who stay over Saturday night). Congestion pricing is probably not necessary for Saskatchewan, but road use pricing might be appropriate. This could reduce the damage caused by those who abuse the infrastructure, but if vehicle operators don't have to account for the damage they cause to the system, there is no incentive for them to reduce their consumption of the asset.

Road pricing might mean that all vehicles don't pay the same amount for using the highway. Just as the airline has different passengers paying different amounts for seats on the same aircraft on a travel route, perhaps different users of the highway system should pay different rates based upon their desired level of service or benefits derived.

No matter what models are considered, industry cannot be expected to absorb the costs. There is not enough slack in the system to allow this to happen. Any increases will be passed along to the consumers. The challenge will be to transition from a system where the highways are considered to be free assets supported by public funds to a system price signals can be attached to highway use. The true cost of operating a vehicle on the road system should be factored into the normal business costs and decision processes. Road pricing may be difficult to implement in a province with a large geographical area and sparse population where implicit subsidies have been provided for years. Sometimes subsidies are justified in the public interest. These may be implemented in a manner that is open for public review and scrutiny. A good example of transportation services that are explicitly subsidized in the public interest is the Saskatchewan Transportation Company.

A key issue for taxpayers is transparency. There is a perception that the revenue generated from fuel taxes should be dedicated to highway construction and maintenance. Few people realize that the revenue generated from road-related fuel taxes is less than the amount being spent and significantly less than the amount required to maintain the asset value. The situation is different at the federal level where the federal government takes in approximately $4 B per year but spends only $200 M. From a theoretical perspective and if the system were to be transparent, the funds collected for vehicle registration would also support highway maintenance.

There was discussion around the details of the trucking programs and implications for economic development. The Transportation Partnership Program, where the permit fees are based on productivity gains, could result in permit fees that are substantially greater than similar permits in neighboring jurisdictions. Even if the fees are justified to support the infrastructure, Saskatchewan business could be less competitive if the trucking programs are inconsistent with other program. Even if the programs are made more onerous on the basis of safety, Saskatchewan companies could be at a disadvantage if they are required to bear the associated costs.

There is a need to balance between trucking and environmental efficiencies, social concerns and public perception. Public safety is important and can be enhanced with a good level of safety consciousness. The competitive aspect of the programs should be considered within the broader economic context.

Concern was raised about the use of "F" plates. The general feeling was that "F" plates should be restricted to vehicles that are essential for the farming operation. When the "F" classification was created, the average farm truck was a two or three axle truck. Now there are B-trains operating with "F" plates. These vehicles are two to three times longer and three to four times heavier. The drivers require special skills and the vehicles require more maintenance if they are to be operated safely.

The relationship between truck size and weight and safety was discussed. Saskatchewan is a leader in the recognition of the importance of vehicle performance criteria for evaluating the safety of each vehicle configuration. All vehicles operating on the highway system must generally comply with the key criteria that impact on highway safety.

While permit programs may have originally been implemented to equalize the transportation costs, the current partnership program appears to be based more on a tax grab than an economic incentive. In some instances this program may in fact provide undesirable disincentives. Perhaps the programs should focus more on safety, training and behavior rather than money.

One problem relating to the trucking programs is the nature of the hauls. In the partnership program, many of the hauls originate on municipal roads and must use the municipal system to access the highway network. This results in incremental costs for the rural municipalities. The agreements allow for funds to be allocated back to the municipalities on the basis of the length of road being used, but the amounts are small and not adequate to address the incremental costs.

Within the context of the over-all transportation system, there is only one true way to determine the most effective mode of transportation. That is to privatize both modes and allow them to compete for the same traffic. Under this scenario, Saskatchewan would probably have fewer roads. There will always be room for both road and rail, but both systems must be maintained at acceptable levels to be effective. Similar to the highway infrastructure, rail beds must be maintained and upgraded. In some instances, it is easier and more cost effective to abandon a branch line rather than invest the required funds to return it to the standard necessary to support long term traffic.

Safety:

Saskatchewan's carrier profile system is intended to provide a mechanism whereby carrier history can be tracked, monitored and made available to other jurisdictions. This will enable jurisdictions to be aware of any infractions incurred remain updated about the operating status of commercial carriers registered in their jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction is then responsible for implementing the National Safety Code as it applies to carriers registered in their jurisdiction.

There are 6200 carriers registered in Saskatchewan's system, of which only 400 have had reportable accidents over the last two years. In Saskatchewan, the threshold for inclusion in the program is 11 000 kg. All commercial vehicles registered for over that threshold are monitored, with the exception of "F" plated vehicles. They are exempted from the program because the accident rates for these vehicles are approximately half of that for the rest of the fleet. There was concern from the group that these figures may not accurately reflect risk because these vehicles generally average fewer miles per year. They still pose risks when they are on the highway. The principle should recognize that when two trucks are travelling together on the highway, if all aspects of driver training and vehicle operation are considered equal, they should be treated as equals.

Random audits are conducted to confirm that companies are complying with the system requirements. Company records include weigh bills, but auditors do not inspect them for the purpose of checking compliance. Only a small portion of the actual overweight incidents appear on the carrier profile because it records only those recorded as a result of a ticket being issued. If the appropriate legislative support were in place, there would be opportunities to combine weight and safety audits. The system would then support more than just safety initiatives.

Any process for monitoring carrier fitness must be fair. It should include all carriers and balance between the desired level of monitoring and the level that provides the best value for money within the available funding levels.

The Canadian Automobile Association has 165,000 members in Saskatchewan. These members provide constant feedback about concerns they encounter on the highway system. According to CAA Saskatchewan, in many ways Saskatchewan is ahead of the other provinces in its working relationship with stakeholder groups. The CAA Saskatchewan membership understands the need for trucks, but this understanding doesn't make life on the highways any easier. Trucks cause

nervousness among drivers of smaller cars. This nervousness impacts driver reaction and capability.

Following are some concerns expressed by CAA Saskatchewan members:

- Speed of trucks - This is most evident when being passed or being followed too closely.
- Weather conditions – Trucking companies say they take their vehicles off the highways when driving conditions are dangerous, but there is skepticism about that.
- Truck size – CAA Saskatchewan participated in a test project involving overlength vehicles on the two-lane highway. Feedback indicated an appreciation for the signs indicating the length of the vehicle so the drivers were not surprised when they pulled out to pass. This knowledge made drivers feel less threatened.
- Visibility – Test vehicles for this project had reflective strips that made the truck more visible at night and in adverse conditions.
- Number of trucks – Members understand the reasons for the increase in the numbers of trucks, but are concerned about the increase in truck volumes.
- Condition of the highways – The highway condition is a contributing factor in the way people drive, which influences accident occurrences.
- Hours of service – This important issue is being addressed by technical experts. The experts should continue their work until they can find a safe solution. Fatigue is an issue for all drivers, not just truck drivers.
- Noncommercial vehicles hauling heavy loads – Trucks registered with "F" plates should be required to comply with the same safety standards as other trucks of the same size and weight. The public cannot always differentiate between commercial and noncommercial trucks when they encounter them on the highway.
- Road damage – Truck size and weight impact road damage caused by trucks. This road damage then creates safety hazards. There is concern that trucks are not paying their fair share. We need to identify the costs of trucking and correlate this with their contributions back into the system.

These issues can be addressed through education, proper response to situations as they arise, maintaining a road system that meets demand and continuation of programs that promote random checks.

An ideal world would see trucks travelling on designated truck routes, segregated from automobile traffic. This is not possible for a broad base of highways, so the department must consider design as an incentive to route trucks. For example, trucks do not always take the most direct route if that route is congested and will result in time delays, frustrated drivers and the risks associated with road rage. There may be opportunities to create "truck routes" to minimize the interaction between cars and trucks in congested areas.

The suggestion was raised that Saskatchewan should be looking to the U.S. for guidance with regulations and programs. The U.S. has more restrictive hours of service limits than Saskatchewan. While we may be able to learn from the U.S., we should be careful not to assume that what is good for the U.S. is good for Saskatchewan. It was pointed out that the trucking industry in the U.S. operates on more of a "hub and spoke" pattern than a "long haul" environment. Shorter hours of work can apply because drivers are often not far from base.

Saskatchewan's truckers operate mostly in the "long haul" environment, so shorter hours might mean they have to stop just a couple hours from home base. This could result in more time on the road and ultimately, more fatigue.

Saskatchewan's new initiative to partner with rural municipalities to divert truck traffic from TMS highways onto municipal gravel roads was discussed. The truck drivers suggest the department should be addressing the problem (inability of TMS highways to carry the traffic) instead of avoiding it. Drivers prefer not to drive on gravel surfaces. They indicated they don't mind gravel for winter travel when the surface is frozen, but are concerned about the implications of the heavy truck traffic on gravel roads during the spring and summer.

The possibility for reducing weights was discussed. Although this is always a possibility, many areas of Saskatchewan depend on trucks to deliver commodities to market. Most of these commodities already have low market values, so any reduction in weights would result in increased transportation costs. This could mean Saskatchewan producers would not be able to sell their commodities without subsidies to cover transportation costs. The challenge will be to transition from a system where the highways are viewed as assets free for use or consumption, to a system where highway use is properly priced. Since the economy has developed in an environment where road pricing has been factored into the cost of trucking, any shift cannot be made without due consideration for an extended adjustment period. In the case of commodities grown for world markets, if the transportation costs make those commodities non-competitive, then producers may consider shifting to other commodities as a good business choice.

If someone knowingly loads a vehicle to less than the maximum weight, there is no incentive or benefit for him or her. As long as the highways are perceived as free assets, there is no incentive to save them. A pricing mechanism that reflect the use of the asset would provide incentives to save the asset.

Truck speeds have an impact on safety. While Saskatchewan's special permit programs restrict truck speeds to 90 km/hr, there are several studies that indicate the differential in speed between automobiles and trucks is a greater risk than the speed itself. It was noted that an 8 km/hr speed differential can double the likelihood of accidents. Although many technical studies exist, speed is an important factor in public perception. According to feedback from CAA Saskatchewan, reduced speeds for trucks are good.

Driver training is another safety concern. Continuous upgrading and re-testing is advisable and should be required. Many companies currently operate in-house programs for their drivers. Recent programs for drug and alcohol testing have had a positive impact on public perception. In reality, drugs and alcohol are not big problems. Most drivers are professionals who are not prepared to risk their careers. The trucking industry is no different than any other work environment with people who tarnish the reputation of the industry.

There was discussion about the need to apply the regulations equitably to all vehicles. The regulations are applied to all vehicles, but different regulations apply to some classes of vehicles. For example, "F" trucks are not required to have vehicle inspections, although they may be as large and heavy as commercial trucks. From a safety perspective, there is no rationale for having

different regulations. If the accident rates are lower for "F" plated vehicles, then that should be reflected in the insurance rates. The group felt that "a truck is a truck". Size and weight are common issues, irrespective of the commodity being hauled. All trucks should be treated equally from a safety perspective.

APPENDIX C

FORUM CONTACT LIST

TRUCKING ADVISORY FORUM PARTICIPANTS CONTACT INFORMATION

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